The Riddlemaster

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Reviewer:
Ferelith Hordon [3]

New Talent:
off

Editors Choice:
off

Media type:
Book

BfK Rating:
4

Three children look out over the waves to the island. Maybe there is treasure there, but there seems to be no way to get there. Or is there? There is a boat piloted by the mysterious Riddlemaster and full of extraordinary mixture of creatures. The children can join them - but they will not be able to reach the island unless they answer seven riddles.

Kevin Crossley-Holland takes a familiar theme from traditional tales; the riddle contest. Here he weaves it into a story about stories. The children are looking for treasure. Such a quest will always involve a journey and jeopardy. They must cross water in the company of a band of creatures, some friendly, familiar, others strange and threatening whose aim is to devour the children. As they travel nearer and nearer their goal, the riddles become more allusive and difficult. It takes quick wits and imagination to find the answers. The reward - a world of storytelling.

Crossley-Holland tells his story with no fuss and a poet’s economy. Vivid snatches of description and dialogue combine to create a sense of immediacy. The illustrations by Stéphanie Jorisch create an atmosphere of strangeness. Her spiky lines combine with her watercolour palette to provide a luminous accompaniment to the prose. This is a picture book for older children that will challenge them visually as well providing food for thought. Definitely one to share - well crafted as an object; beautifully crafted as a story.

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